

Central Bedfordshire Council

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday, 5 December 2017

Cranfield University Masterplan

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This report relates to a decision that is Key.

Purpose of this report

1. Outline the proposals contained within the Cranfield University Masterplan.
2. Seek endorsement of the Masterplan and its adoption as technical guidance for Development Management purposes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to:

1. **endorse the Cranfield University Masterplan and adopt it as technical guidance for Development Management purposes.**

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

3. Cranfield University Masterplan relates to the Cranfield University Campus only and not the village of Cranfield. It will have limited impact on the village of Cranfield. This Report was not considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Background

4. The Masterplan covers the area of Cranfield University that includes the academic campus, Technology Park and the residential and recreational core areas. The Airport is not included in the coverage of this Masterplan as this will be subject to a separate Masterplan and planning application, which is anticipated to be submitted in late Autumn 2017.

5. The separate Masterplan and planning application for Cranfield Airport will consider the redevelopment of the airpark to the north of Cranfield University. The proposals for the redevelopment of the airpark are to create a modern airport for private jets which will generate the investment the Airport needs for infrastructure upgrades. Maintaining an operational Airport is essential for the University's research objectives, particularly in defence and aviation sectors. The proposals include new aircraft hangars and associated business terminal, new office space and a hotel. The planning application and masterplan are presently out for pre-application consultation and will be subject to statutory consultation and scrutiny prior to determination.
6. The Cranfield University Masterplan signals the University's development objectives for its campus and establishes a detailed framework within which future development proposals will be brought forward. The Masterplan is intended to respond to the increasingly competitive higher education sector, setting out principles for future development and enhancement. The Masterplan also delivers a greater amount development certainty for the University, Council and local community.
7. The Masterplan is a high-level document that sets out general overarching principles and aims for development on the campus to deliver the masterplan objectives. The more concentrated and detailed work will be addressed when future planning applications are submitted.
8. The Masterplan is supported by the following documents:
 - Planning and Environmental Statement
 - Transport Assessment
 - Statement of Community Involvement
9. Policy DM11 of the adopted Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, November 2009 for the north Central Bedfordshire recognises Cranfield University as significant facility in the countryside making a significant contribution to the local economy through their activities. This means it has the potential to provide additional jobs which will help to meet the employment objectives and needs of Central Bedfordshire.
10. DM11: Significant facilities in the countryside states:
Management plans, development briefs or masterplans agreed by the Council will be required prior to the significant expansion or redevelopment of the facilities at Cranfield University and Technology Park, Shuttleworth College, Millbrook Proving Ground and RAF Henlow and DISC Chicksands.

All proposals for significant development at these facilities will be assessed in terms of their:

- Impact on the open countryside;
- Provision of sustainable transport;
- Justification;
- Scale, layout and design – which must be appropriate to the establishment and its setting.

Planning applications that are considered acceptable against the criteria will be approved.

Further major facilities that may be developed within the district with a similar level of importance in terms of employment or research will be considered under this policy.

11. Cranfield University also has the potential to attract other high technology-orientated businesses to the area. These are well adapted to the knowledge economy and create a cluster effect of similar or linked businesses. This means that that the University can and does make a significant contribution to the local economy. In line with DM11, the Masterplan has been prepared prior to the expansion and redevelopment of Cranfield University.
12. The Masterplan is being endorsed to allow development to come forward in line with the over-arching principles set out in the Masterplan to ensure development on site is appropriate and sustainable.

Masterplan proposals

13. The Masterplan sets out the over-arching objectives and guiding principles against which future planning applications will be determined. It is made up of a Framework Plan and written document. The Framework Plan identifies the indicative location of proposed new buildings and key public realm improvements. The written document sets out the vision for the University site and Central Bedfordshire Council's expectations for any planning applications to be determined.
14. The key feature of the Masterplan is the blurring between academic research and commercial-facing activity, for example through the Technology Park. The Masterplan will seek to restructure the greater campus area so that traditional distinctions between the University and the Technology Park will disappear in favour of a thematic approach to campus organisation, encouraging a closer and more integrated relationship between commerce and academia.

15. The Masterplan contains proposals with the potential of delivering a net increase in floor space (of approximately 77,00sqm) across the campus, which includes 400 new bed spaces for residential students. Although the total floor space on site is increasing, this is largely made up of active research and development and commercial spaces which tend to be large floorplate buildings with lower occupancy levels. There will be some conventional teaching space and an appropriately sized retail hub to support the campus, but student numbers are not anticipated to grow as a consequence of this Masterplan. However, the Masterplan does propose an increase in student accommodation.
16. In addition to the blurring between the academic campus and Technology Park, the Masterplan also intends to support a high quality modern setting that is attractive and can facilitate a growing research and commercial community. This will be achieved by creating a sense of place by enhancing the public realm and promoting a landscape strategy; encouraging iconic buildings that reflect the character of the area and improving access through the site and promoting more sustainable forms of travel within and to the site.
17. Though the reorganisation and improvements on the campus, improvements to support sustainable modes of travel will be encouraged. This will be achieved through implementing a campus-wide parking strategy and promoting wider links to the strategic infrastructure proposals such as East West Rail and Oxford-Cambridge Expressway. The impacts on the local highway network have been considered in the Masterplan and supporting Transport Assessment.
18. The key objectives of the Masterplan include the:
 - (a) Improvement of the campus arrival and navigation experience to align with the reputation of the University
 - (b) Creation of high quality pedestrian environments, including a central core to promote interaction and a sense of place
 - (c) Delivery of a connected and walkable campus that prioritises sustainable transport choices
 - (d) Use of way-finding and clear design aesthetic in urban design to provide a safe and consistent campus experience
 - (e) Provision of high quality facilities for students, staff, commercial partners and visitors that meet the technological and sustainability objectives of the University
 - (f) Structuring the campus around the University's key research and teaching themes
 - (g) Enhancement of biodiversity across the site by linking key streets to the surrounding landscape.

Consultation and Changes in response to feedback

19. There has been extensive consultation on the draft Masterplan. This included a stakeholder workshop with technical officers from Central Bedfordshire Council at the inception of the draft Masterplan. Officers have considered and enhanced various iterations of the masterplan over the past year. Following the preparation of a draft Masterplan, a public exhibition and consultation was held.
20. A four-week public consultation on the draft Masterplan commenced on 13 July 2017. To mark the consultation, a public exhibition was held on 13 and 14 July 2017 at the Aerospace Integration Research Centre (AIRC) Building at Cranfield University. The consultation event was advertised within Cranfield village at various central locations and local newspapers. The consultation material was available on the Central Bedfordshire website and available to view at Priory House. In addition, a stakeholder event was held for Local Members on Friday 14 July 2017.
21. Further details of the consultation held and feedback received can be found within the Statement of Community Involvement, Appendix B.
22. The main responses to the consultation related to the lack of detail in the draft Masterplan. The Cranfield Masterplan is a strategic document setting out the high-level design principles and aims for development on the campus to deliver the masterplan objectives. These detailed elements identified through the consultation will be addressed when any future planning applications are submitted.
23. Related to this, respondents considered that it was not clear what the purposes of the draft Masterplan was. Accordingly, sections of the Masterplan have been updated to provide more clarity and detail with regards to how the Masterplan will guide future planning applications and the issues they will have to address through proposed development proposals.
24. The feedback in these responses has been analysed and a detailed response has been provided in the Statement of Community Involvement.
25. The key amendments made in response to the consultation are as follows:
 - Further information and explanations have been provided to explain the relationship and context of Cranfield University with adjoining settlements and key infrastructure projects, such as the proposed East West Rail.

- References to documents, such as the Landscape Character Assessment, and matters, such as detailed planting schemes, that need to be referred to and addressed through detailed planning applications.
- Plans and maps throughout the draft Masterplan have been amended and updated to ensure they are consistent throughout the document and accurately reflect the aims and objectives of the draft Masterplan.

Council Priorities

26. Cranfield University Masterplan will deliver against the following Council's priorities:
 - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
 - Improving education and skills.
27. The Masterplan promotes the enhancement of the university thus creating and supporting job growth, managing growth in the countryside, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

28. In line with common practice, the Developer has entered into a Planning Performance Agreement with the Planning Division for the administration and supervision of the Masterplan.
29. Once endorsed, the Cranfield University Masterplan will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Financial Implications

30. There has been a cost to the Council in the preparation of the Masterplan in terms of staff resources but this has been recouped partly through a Planning Performance Agreement and been met from existing budgets. There are no financial implications arising directly from the report, as it deals with planning matters.

Equalities Implications

31. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
32. The Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) and its Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) identified a number of key challenges facing the area. These included:
 - a) Creating a strong and sustainable local economy.
 - b) Continuing to support diversification of the local economy and in the particular the growth in research facilities which have located in Central Bedfordshire.
 - c) Ensuring new development and the public realm is high quality and respects its environment.
 - d) Securing landscape and biodiversity protection and enhancement.
33. The DPD EIA considered that the DPD took a balanced view creating a planning framework that benefits the community of north Central Bedfordshire. The report highlights the key objectives of the Masterplan, many of which will address key equality issues, particularly relating to employment opportunities.

Risk Management

34. Policy DM11 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan identifies Cranfield University as a significant facility in the countryside and makes references to a Masterplan being prepared prior to the expansion and redevelopment of this facility. The policy and Masterplan together set the requirements for the development and a framework within which future planning decisions will be made. A failure to endorse and subsequently adopt the Masterplan gives the Council as Local Planning Authority reduced control if piecemeal applications are submitted at Cranfield University.
35. Other risks, such as failure to deliver the Council's priorities, reputational risks, failure to discharge statutory responsibilities, failure of partnership working, and environmental and financial risks could also arise. The Masterplan serves to minimise these risks by setting an agreed framework for development in advance of the planning applications and then onwards through to implementation.

Public Health

36. The Masterplan requires enhanced and new cycling and pedestrian routes which will allow people to use sustainable modes of transport. The level of public open space that is to be provided on the site will also contribute to health and wellbeing.

Community Safety

37. The Council needs to ensure that it complies with its statutory duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act. The Masterplan complies with the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide which includes criteria set down for community safety.

Sustainability

38. Within the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) for Central Bedfordshire (North), Cranfield University is identified as a significant facility in the countryside contributing to the local economy through their activities and potential to provide employment. The redevelopment and enhancement of Cranfield University and realigning it with commercial enterprises will further contribute to the local economy by attracting high technology-orientated businesses creating a cluster effect. The Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD has also been the subject of a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment.
39. The Masterplan also proposes enhanced and new open space throughout the campus and into the adjoining countryside. The Masterplan also identifies the sustainability measures and key principles that can be incorporated into the site.

Conclusion and next Steps.

40. The Masterplan has been prepared in line with the Council's requirements for local engagement and consultation. Full consideration has been afforded to the consultation exercise and where possible amendments have been made to the Masterplan. As a planning technical document, the Masterplan has followed due process and is fit for development management purposes. Executive is asked to consider the content of the Masterplan and adopt it as technical guidance for the purposes of development management.

Appendices

- Appendix A:** Draft Cranfield University Masterplan (in four parts)
Appendix B: Statement of Community Involvement

Background Papers

None

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